

GENDER ROLES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS  
OF EGYPTIAN TELEVISION  
COMMERCIALS

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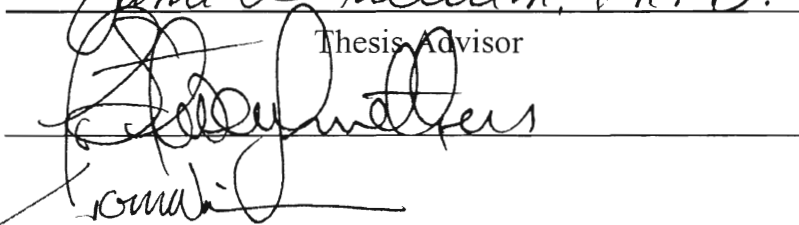
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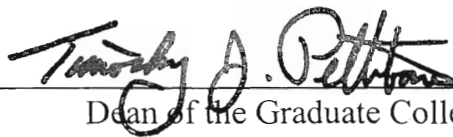
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the last three decades, a growing concern has developed regarding stereotyped sex roles, which prevail in any society, “having undesirable consequences both for the psychological health of the individual and for the egalitarian ideals of societies” (McArthur & Resko, 1975, p. 209). Among the possible sources of influence on sex-role stereotypes are the mass media. According to Social Learning theory, observational learning from live and symbolic models (i.e., films, television and books) is the first step in the acquisition of sex-typed behavior (Bandura, 1977). Given the concern that advertising influences society’s perception of appropriate sex roles, feminists, researchers and others have expressed concern about the roles portrayed by women in advertising (Gilly, 1988). They believe that these stereotypes serve as poor models and inhibit sympathetic understanding of individual differences. Pollay (1986) suggested that if there were no other influences to counter the effects of advertising, people would restrict their expectations to those stereotyped roles.

For example, the Canadian government takes the position of giving fair and equitable portrayal of women and men in advertising. Its main concern is the negative social impact of the traditional gender stereotyping, which reflects male-dominated attitudes and roles in the society (Zhou & Chen, 1997).

Many feminists have paid extensive attention to the uses to which women have been put in ads either as sex objects or as thoroughly mindless creatures who depend on others or cannot make their own decisions (Goffman, 1979). Although defenders of advertising might protest that advertisements do not create negative sex-roles attitudes but are merely responding to existing ones, McArthur & Resko (1975) concluded that this is not true. They believe that the stereotyped portrayal of the sexes in and of itself provides good reason to be concerned about the characteristics of men and women depicted in television advertisements. The possibility that these characteristics will influence the sex-role attitudes and behavior of viewers provides even more cause for concern.

Erving Goffman, a social scientist, examined the ways in which men and women are pictured in advertisements and what those ads tell us about ourselves. Goffman concluded that advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave. This depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women are, or want to be, or should be, not only in relation to themselves but also in relation to each other (Goffman, 1979).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Most contemporary research typically examines only the gender roles portrayed in U.S. advertising. Studies on cross-cultural comparisons of gender-role portrayals are still rare. This research study will expand the study of sex-role portrayals in TV advertising by examining how men and women are portrayed in Egyptian television commercials and



compare these portrayals to U.S. television commercials and commercials from other countries, as reported in the literature. This study will extend the body of research investigating gender-role stereotypes in advertising by conducting a content analysis of Egyptian television commercials recorded from the prime time of the first Egyptian television station. According to the Egyptian Radio and TV Yearbook (2000), the First Channel, which is examined in this study, is the most popular and representative Egyptian television channel.

### **Research Questions**

This research study is designed to explore the portrayal of women in Egyptian television advertisements. This study will attempt to analyze the content of television commercials in Egypt during prime time and compare these portrayals to U.S. advertising, as reported in the literature. Several variables will be examined in order to analyze how men and women are depicted, for example, characters present, setting, voice of primary narrator, male/female relationship roles, degree of dress, primary role, and age. This study will attempt to answer three research questions:

1. What is the content of Egyptian prime time television commercials in terms of gender-role portrayal?
2. Does the portrayal of women in the commercials reflect the Egyptian culture?
3. What are the differences between Egypt and the United States or other different countries in terms of gender portrayal in television commercials?

## **Background**

The Arab Republic of Egypt is located in Northern Africa. Egypt is the largest, fastest growing and among the most modern of the Arab countries. Its population about 69.5 million. lives primarily in the Nile River valley (Central Intelligence Agency, 2001). Based on United Nations statistics (2000), the ratio of males to females is (100 to 103.1).

Islam is the religion of the state and cultural force in Egypt. Over ninety percent of the population are Muslims with the remaining being primarily Christians (Central Intelligence Agency, 2001). Egypt is one of Islam's most influential intellectual centers (<http://www.sis.gov.eg>). Al Azhar University, the oldest university in the world, built in the tenth century, graduates Islamic scholars from every Muslim country on earth. The Rector of Al Azhar occupies one of the most important hierarchical positions in the Muslim world and exercises great influence over religious issues of the day (SIS, 1992).

Arabic is the country's official language, however, English and French are widely spoken and understood (Kamalipour & Hamid, 1994). The Egyptian dialect is distinct from all other Arab countries and, because of the country's dominance of the media (television, cinema, radio and music), the most recognizable and universal Arab popular singers from as far as Morocco and Syria often immigrate to Egypt and sing in the Egyptian dialect instead of their own (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Egypt is considered the leader of the Arabic advertising world because of its long ancient history, advanced modern economy, and strong cultural influence in other Arab countries (Martin, 1998). On its collection of countries profiles, the BBC stated that Egypt was one of the first Middle Eastern countries to open up to the West, which means

that it is seen by many as the intellectual and cultural leader in the region (www.news.bbc.co.uk).

Abernathy and Franke (1996) point out that there is a gap in literature, stating that no study has examined the advertising information in any part of the Middle East other than Saudi Arabia. This study will help close the knowledge gap by analyzing the content of Egyptian television advertising.

### **Egyptian Women Movements**

The first feminist movements in the Arab Middle East were born in Egypt within the first few decades of the twentieth century (Bates & Rassam, 2001). However, there were several indicators that paved the way to the birth of these feminist movements. For example, in 1832, a School of Midwives was established in Egypt. This school, through its six-year program, was intended to teach young women some basics of modern medicine besides obstetrics and midwifery. This was a good enough reason for LaVerne Kuhnke, the leading historian of the subject, to refer to this school as “the first government medical school for women in the Middle East” (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p.36). At a time when medical men in Europe were gradually replacing women in the medical profession on the ground that women were weak or unfit for public service, the Egyptian School of Midwives was offering women the opportunity to receive modern education in medical science and to be part of the state-sponsored medical system (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

After this important stage, Egyptian women became more prepared than other women in the Middle East to ask for their liberation. Nearly half a century later, the

Egyptian woman was the first in the Arab World to claim her right to greater independence, to work, and to public and political life. In addition, girls began to appear next to boys as characters in books designed for the education of the young. A book of parables from 1876 has as many female as male characters in its stories, designed to highlight good and bad character traits for boys and girls (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Near the end of the nineteenth century (1892), women's magazines started to appear in Egypt. As a matter of fact, women's magazines for readers of Arabic and biographical dictionaries of and by women first appeared in Egypt. One of the most popular ones was the *Magazine of the Women's Awakening*. Two famous slogans that were on the cover of that magazine are, "Awaken your women, and your nations will live" and "Nations are made by men, and men made by mothers." One study found that there were more than twenty magazines for and about women by 1914, and 14 more by 1935 (Abdel-Rahman, 1981).

In 1899, the issue of women's education received its first full, detailed attention with the publication of Qasim Amine's book *The Liberation of Women*. Qasim Amine is an Egyptian Muslim thinker and one of the famous Egyptian writers who had written extensively on women's rights and the necessity of their education. He said that Egypt would benefit from the active participation of all its citizens men and women alike (Shafique, 1960).

In 1919, women of all classes were participants in the national demonstrations of the spontaneous, nationwide response to Britain's banishment of Egypt's national leaders. Elite women's participation in public politics spurred the founding of the Egyptian

Feminist Union (EFU) in 1923. It was the first explicitly feminist organization in Egypt and was highly supported by religious leaders (Ahmed, 1992).

During the 1950s and 1960s, women played a tremendous role in public and political life, specifically in the national revolution of 1952. In 1951, 1,000 women went to the parliament and asked for their equal rights with men in all aspects of life, such as sharing in the parliament and elections (Shafique, 1960). After becoming Egyptian president, Nasser introduced the concept of “state feminism.” His policies of mass education and guaranteed employment for graduates, regardless of sex, were based on the concept of the woman as a worker and citizen whose participation was essential for national development. As a result, in 1952 the first three women’s parties formed, and 1962 was the first time a woman held a state departmental position (Shafique, 1960). Since that time, Egypt has hosted many conventions dealing with women’s affairs on both national and international levels.

### **Gender Roles Between Tradition and Change**

In the twentieth century, the traditional roles of men and women have evolved as a result of many political and social changes. Ibrahim (1980) conducted a study about women as production workers in urban Egypt. This study described the gender role in lower-class Egyptian society. In this particular class, husbands were assigned as the primary breadwinner for the family and responsible for household expenses. On the other hand, traditional married women managed the household, cared for the children and budgeted their husbands’ income to meet all the household needs. However, this gender role has been changed gradually because of the realities of the Egyptian economy.

Supporting a family when prices are constantly on the rise often means that one income is insufficient, and consequently, women started to work outside the home. These economic realities have emphasized women's roles outside the home and created positive attitudes toward women's employment. While traditionally men considered it shameful for their wives to work, this is less true today, with additional income becoming essential. Now, women who have an education are gaining respect and are considered desirable candidates for marriage since they can work and help support their families (Ibrahim, 1980). A recent statistics by the World Bank (2001) indicated that women are working outside the home in greater numbers with about 34% of Egyptian women employed in the work force.

### **Purpose of Study**

Many feminists have pointed out the social and political purposes served by the advertisements reinforcing the notion of men as a naturally dominant and women as naturally subordinate (Goffman, 1979). This cross-cultural study attempts to present a description of Egyptian television commercials by evaluating the area of gender-role portrayal and compares it to the real gender roles in Egyptian society. Also, this study will conduct a comparative study between the United States, as well as other countries, and Egypt to determine the differences in terms of gender portrayal in television commercials.

## **Methodology**

Quantitative content analysis will be the method used in this study. Content analysis is a specific research approach used frequently in all areas of the media. The method is popular with mass media researchers because it is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Most studies that examine gender portrayal in television commercials are based on content analysis. Kerlinger (1986) indicated that the systematic characteristic of content analysis, which means that the content to be analyzed is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules. Thus, content analysis is objective, which means that the researcher's bias should not enter into the findings.

## **Sample**

For this study, 18 hours of Egyptian prime time television commercials were videotaped. The output of the First Channel, the most popular Egyptian television channel (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994), was videotaped between the times of 7:00 -10:00 p.m., "prime time," for the last six days of May 2001. Two different coders coded the commercials. Findings were compared to U.S. advertisements as described in the literature.

## **Instrument**

Fullerton and Kendrick (2000) created a new systematic coding instrument for the purposes of analyzing television commercials. They compiled a variety of categories and

coding schemes from several different studies to create a new systematic coding scheme.

The compilation of the coding scheme is as follows:

- McArthur & Resko (1975) primary role.
- Soley & Kurzbard (1986) sexual content, sexual contact and degree of dress.
- Goffman (1976) male/female relationship roles.
- Bretl & Cantor (1988) setting and primary narrator.
- Craig (1992) characters present.

Advertising depicting animals or cartoon figures will be excluded in this study. All coding will be done in English. Coders will evaluate the TV commercials separately and inter-coder reliability will be calculated using the Holsti's (1969) method. Data will be analyzed using the SPSS program. The commercials have been recorded and converted to the NTSC system.

### **Significance of the Study**

Research on Arab women is relatively young field. The sum of what is currently known about women and gender in Arab societies is minuscule (Ahmed, 1992). Besides, every country's television system reflects the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has developed (Gerbner, 1988). This study extends the research in cross-cultural advertising by analyzing the content of television advertisements from Egypt. Therefore, this study can also contribute to empirical work in international marketing, which is currently lacking (Gilly, 1988; Abernathy & Franke, 1996). Meissner (1986) studied different countries and concluded that culture has an impact on marketing strategies and different cultures require different types of strategies.



This study is important because it is a cross-cultural approach to examining how cultural values influence role portrayals of women in advertising.

Also, studying portrayals of women in Egyptian television commercials is important because no study has done that so far. Although there has been some substantive research done in many countries, studies in the area of sex-role portrayal in advertising remain limited in Egypt. Most of the research done was not formally or empirically conducted.

Furthermore, television is becoming an increasingly popular medium in both developed and developing countries. According to Gunter (1987), the impact of television upon social behavior may be greatest during commercials, which are often quick-paced, dynamic, and attention getting. In view of television's potential role in shaping gender attitudes and behavior, studies such as this will no doubt extend the responsibility of the advertising industry beyond its primary goal of promotion to the production of commercials that augment our perception of social reality. In fact, this study may provide a basis for change in the way women are depicted (Mwangi, 1996).

George Gerbner's Cultivation theory was developed to explain the effects of television viewing on people's perceptions, attitudes and values. Exposures to the same repeated messages produce what Gerbner calls "Cultivation," or the teaching of a common worldview, common roles, and common values (Gerbner, 1998). Also, Gerbner described television as a centralized system of story telling. Its drama, commercials, news and other programs bring a relatively coherent system of images and messages into every home. Also, social learning theory, founded by Albert Bandura, is useful in studying the effects of the mass media (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This theory

suggesting that much learning takes place through observing the behavior of others. Social learning is particularly effective through a mass medium such as television (Bandura, 1977).

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations for this study is the lack of randomness of the sample. This study is based on analyzing one week of Egyptian advertising not randomly selected. Another limitation is that though attempts were made during coding process to insure objective judgments, coders objectivity can be particularly troublesome when dealing with coders and content from different cultures and in different languages.

### **Organization of the Study**

This thesis contains five chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction), a framework of what is the thesis about. Chapter 2 (Literature review), an overview of relevant studies that examined gender-roles portrayal in commercials in different countries. Chapter 3 (Methodology), presents the methodology that being used in this study. Chapter 4 (Findings), a presentation of the finding from the collected data. Chapter 5 (Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations), a summary, conclusions and recommendations are reported.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gender-role stereotyping in advertising draws great concern and controversy because of the effect that advertising has on molding attitudes (Buttle,1989). Nearly every country in the world now has commercial television channels, and most adults are exposed to thousands of television advertisements annually (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

As a form of cultural expression, advertising reflects the existing social conditions. Advertising is not just a message about goods and services but also a source of information about values, beliefs, style and life activities of a given culture (Karloff & Lee, 1999). While the power and influence of television on the beliefs and behaviors of viewers remains an important area of research for media researchers, many have concentrated on the portrayal of certain “features” in television ads. The portrayal of gender on television and its social effects have attracted considerable interest (Gunter, 1987). According to research, some individual attitudes are learned partly from advertising as people are exposed to commercials every day (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1987). By reflecting traditional roles of men and women, advertising is capable of reinforcing the notion that such roles are natural (Hawkins and Coney, 1976). Therefore, when these stereotyped roles are repeated constantly without change, they become reality in the minds of viewers (Day, 1997).

Zhou & Chen (1997) stated that in advertising, the repeated portrayals of women in traditional roles or “working” at jobs of low socioeconomic status, could lead an audience to believe that these role or jobs are typical of women. About the consequences of these portrayals, Zhou & Chen stressed the point that these traditional portrayals could also affect women’s self-image and self-concepts negatively and limit their behavior. They could particularly place working women in a sensitive situation which results in prejudice against them.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Some scholars defined stereotype as “a fixed mental image of a group that is frequently applied to all its members.” They suggested that people need categories to group things that are similar in order to study them and to communicate about them (Day, 1997). Since the U.S. feminist movement in the 1960s, critics have charged that advertising stereotypes women in traditional roles, resulting in undesirable social consequences (Darmon & Laroche, 1991).

The construction of meaning theory, which focuses on the influence of mediated reality and stereotyping, is useful for this study. Prior research indicates that women and men learn gender-appropriate behaviors from television (Gunter, 1987). The modern concept of stereotyping was introduced by the distinguished author and columnist Walter Lippmann. In his book *Public Opinion*, Lippmann observed that people have stereotypes about many categories, including mothers, fathers and others. These stereotypes may contain some useful and accurate information about a member in any category. At the same time, each member of any category will have many characteristics that are not

suggested by the stereotypes and may even have some characteristics that run counter to some of the stereotypes (Lippmann, 1932).

Lippmann noted that a pattern of stereotypes is not neutral because stereotyping involves our personal perceptions of reality. Lippmann concluded that people act not on the basis of what truly is taking place or has occurred, but on the basis of what they think is the real situation obtained from depictions provided to them by the medium (Lippmann, 1932). These depictions can lead to inappropriate actions and behavior that have little relationship to the true nature of the world outside (DeFluer & Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Also, Cultivation Theory explains how people gain knowledge and how that knowledge serves to guide their conducts. George Gerbner and his associates have developed both a theoretical framework and an empirical strategy for studying the impact of televised violence on people's beliefs (Gerbner, 1998). They extended the scope of their interest to include not only the portrayal of violence but other forms of behavior shown in television. Gerbner believes that such portrayals influence behavior by shaping, "cultivating," people's beliefs and, therefore, conduct.

Moreover, one theory from the field of psychology that is useful in studying the effects of the mass media is Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory evolved around how people learn and adopt new pattern of behavior as a result of exposure to mass communications. Social learning theory recognizes that people can acquire some behaviors simply by observation and storing the observations as a guide to future behavior. It also explains how people tend to mimic models' behaviors, that are

portrayed in television and eventually adopt these behaviors on a permanent basis (Bandura, 1977).

From the perspective of social learning and socialization, people at a very young age begin learning gender prescriptions (DeFluer & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). These prescriptions are said to be resistant to change later on because they have been with people for so long that people have formed gender role expectations based on them (Zhou & Chen, 1997).

For example, Kimball (1986) studied the sex-role attitudes of children in three separate communities; one receiving no television, one receiving one channel, and one receiving four channels. The survey revealed that children in the communities with television were more stereotyped in their sex role attitudes than were those in the town without television. Moreover, after television was introduced into the no-television community, the attitudes of children in that town became more stereotyped.

### **Review of the U.S. Gender Portrayal Studies**

The women's movement of the 1960s was reshaping women's lives. It also was shaping a new feminist movement in historiography of women in the media (Sloan, 1991). The depiction of women has traditionally been one of the media's most pervasive stereotypes. In the 1950s, most women were homemakers, and ads often portrayed them as being preoccupied with better ways to do the laundry and discovering new ways to please their husbands (Day, 1997). Although women's roles have expanded, their portrayal in advertising continues to be narrow (Courtney & Whipple, 1983).

### **The 1970s U.S. Gender Studies**

In response to feminists' criticism of the stereotypical portrayal of women in the media, a number of researchers examined gender roles in advertising (Sengupta, 1995). This type of research originated in the United States and began in the early 1970s. For example, Courtney and Lockeretz's (1971) pioneering study examined advertisements in eight general interest magazines. They found that advertisements generally showed women in their homes, incapable of making important decisions, dependent on men, and needing their protection. They found that only 9% of the women were shown in working roles.

Moreover, Dominick and Rauch (1972) compared men's and women's portrayal in television commercials. They found that men were significantly more likely to be shown outdoors or in a business setting. They also found that 48 different occupations were shown for men while only 18 shown for women. They concluded that women are most often seen as sex objects, housewives, and mothers, but hardly as professionals or working wives.

Courtney and Whipple (1974) discovered that females were more likely to appear in commercials for products used in the kitchen, bathroom and the household. Also, most of products' representatives were predominantly male.

McArthur and Resko (1975) pointed out that men were represented more often as authorities, in independent roles and in occupational settings. Speaking about rewards of using the product, women were more likely to gain approval of family and/or the opposite sex, and males were more likely to gain approval of friends/or career advancements.

Goffman in his book *Gender Advertisements* (1979) indicated that women were often portrayed as subordinated and inferior to men in advertisements.

In their examination of trends in sex roles in U.S. TV commercials, Schneider & Schneider (1979) tried to examine whether the trend, over time, has been toward a narrowing or widening of the difference between gender role portrayals in TV commercials and actual roles in the population. The findings of their study provide considerable evidence of improvement in role portrayals. They found that female characters were either closer to actual roles or moving toward actual roles more rapidly than male characters.

### **The 1980s U.S. Gender Studies**

Courtney and Whipple (1983) noted that despite minor improvements over time, a women's place continues to be the home. Courtney and Whipple concluded from their review of the portrayal of women and men in advertising that women and men in today's society clearly are far different from their portrayed images in advertising. As sex roles continue to change and expand at a faster rate than advertisers' responses, the images of the sexes in advertising is not keeping pace with the change. In fact, the image reflects the status quo of a time gone by.

Bretl and Cantor (1988) compared the data of their study to the findings of previous research to illustrate trends over time. The results reveal several differences between the portrayal of men and women, but many of the gaps seem to be narrowing. For example, men and women appeared equally often as central characters in prime-time commercials, and men were being presented in increasing numbers as spouses and



parents. However, Bretl and Cantor revealed that 74% of females were still acting as product users in advertisements, and males were more likely to be authoritative central figures.

### **The 1990s U.S. Gender Studies**

Craig (1992) compared the effect of the television day part on gender portrayals in television commercials. The sample was chosen from daytime, when the audience is mostly women; evening prime time, when the sex of the audience is more evenly distributed; and weekend afternoon sportscasts, when men are a large percentage of the audience. The results indicated large and consistent differences in the way men and women are portrayed in these three day parts. First, commercials shown during prime time tended to be balanced in portrayal of men and women. Second, commercials shown during daytime showed women in a more domestic role. Third, commercials shown during weekends portrayed men as central characters.

### **Review of the Cross-Cultural Gender Portrayal Studies**

Since the pioneering content-analysis study by McArthur and Resko (1975) on sex-role stereotyping of television advertisements in America, many others have used a similar methodology and coding scheme to examine similar stereotypes in other countries (Furnham & Mak, 1999). For example, in 1988, Gilly conducted a comparison study to examine gender role portrayals in television advertising of three countries: United States, Mexico, and Australia. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of different cultural values on advertising's depiction of women. This study revealed that stereotypes

are found in the advertising of all three countries, but in different degrees. While Australian advertisements show fewer sex roles differences than those in the United States, Mexican advertisements portray men and women slightly more often in traditional sex roles than U.S. advertisements. Moreover, the study concluded that marketers considering advertising their products in other countries should be aware of the norms in terms of how the sexes are portrayed and also of how those sex role portrayals are changing (Gilly, 1988).

Furnham and Voli (1989) investigated gender stereotyping in Italian television advertisements at different times of the day. They found that males were much more likely to be coded as authorities than users, while females were likely to be portrayed as users than authorities. Also, results showed that females were mostly portrayed in traditional and dependent roles, while males portrayed mostly in professional roles and in occupational settings.

Michell and Taylor's (1990) study on portrayal of women in British advertising indicated that there was a less stereotyping of women as sex objects. They acknowledged that the advertising industry's growing sensitivity toward women can be traced to women's rise to more powerful positions in the business. It seems to be that countries who have advanced women's movements, such as these in northern Europe, have less stereotype in their advertising. For example, Gilly (1988) acknowledged that the women's liberation movement was slower to develop in Mexico than in United States. This is consistent with her findings, which suggested that the Mexican commercials reflect more traditional sex roles than the U.S. ads.

Wiles and Tjernlund (1991) found that Swedish magazine advertisers more often portrayed men and women in recreational roles as opposed to decorative roles in the U.S. magazines. In their women's magazines, Swedish were more likely to depict women in recreational roles, and far less likely to depict women in decorative roles than U.S. magazine advertisers.

A cross-cultural study by Furnham and Bitar (1993) examined the portrayal of men and women in a sample of British television commercials. The findings were that sex role television stereotyping in Britain was more or less constant across time, compared to studies done 5 and 10 years ago, but were weaker than in Italy and comparable to North America.

Also, several studies have examined Asian countries. Sengupta (1995) examined the influence of culture on portrayals of women in advertising by examining television commercials from the United States and Japan. Results of this study show that women from the United States are more likely to be seen in working roles while women in Japanese advertisements are more likely to be portrayed as entertainers. Also, among non-working roles, American women are a little more likely than Japanese women to be shown in a family setting.

Wee, Choong and Tambyah (1995) examined sex role portrayal in television advertising for audiences of Singapore and Malaysia. They concluded that the culture of the country and target audience is one of the most important factors that influence the depiction of women in advertising. In the Malaysian society, where Islam is the dominant religion, men were portrayed as top executives and in an independent roles. Women were frequently portrayed as young housewives who stayed at home to mind the house and the

children. Where in Singapore women are often employed outside home in white-collar and service occupations, the female characters in advertising was most often attractive young women who were concerned with looking good.

Al-Makaty (1996) explored the way women are depicted in Saudi television commercials. This study concluded that women were only shown if their presence related directly to the product and if they are appropriately dressed-head covering and long dresses. Generally, female were portrayed in traditional roles as mothers and housekeeping and are not allowed to sing.

Mwangi (1996) conducted a content analysis on Kenyan television advertisements. the study found that there were no significant differences in the proportion of women and men serving as central characters in commercials. However, both men and women were depicted in traditional roles.

Zhou and Chen (1997) examined the portrayal of men and women on the 10 largest consumer magazines in Canada. They found that a significantly larger proportion of men than women was shown in high/middle level of occupations and in business settings. They also found that women were more likely to be associated with domestic products.

Karloff and Lee (1999) examined the roles of men and women depicted in advertising in a cross-section of magazine categories in the United States and compared the roles of men and women depicted in advertising from similar categories of magazines from Taiwan. This study indicated that men were more likely to be portrayed in managerial, administrative, and sales occupations, while women were portrayed more often in clerical and support occupations or service occupations. Karloff and Lee

concluded that females in Taiwanese ads were portrayed either in very limited roles or far from the decision-making classes compared to their male counterparts.

Fullerton and Kendrick (2000) examined 162 prime-time commercials from a Spanish-language television affiliate in a major U.S. market. The study found that depiction of women is most likely to be in traditional sex-stereotypical roles but to no greater extent and in some cases to a lesser extent than they do in U.S. television advertising.

Al-Olayan and Karande (2000) investigated differences in content of magazine advertisements from the United States and the Arab world. Among the differences they studied is the depiction of men and women based on the role of religion in forming values. They concluded that when ads picture men and/ or women, men and women are portrayed with the same frequency by both the U.S. and Arab world. However, the portrayal of women differs. Women are used in magazine ads mainly when their presence relates to the advertised product, not as sex object. Also, when female models are used, they show the models wearing long dresses covering their bodies. The researchers emphasized the importance for advertisers to be sensitive to the religious implications of their creative strategies.

Many Egyptian scholars pointed out that mass media were more likely to depict women playing minor roles. Al-Abed (1983) conducted a study to describe the portrayal of women in Egyptian television drama. This study concluded that men appeared in 70% of the shows under study, while women appeared only in 30% of the same shows. Also, women were more likely to be housewives, caring for children, and mostly seen as victims. The study indicated that although women started holding highly ranked

positions for long time in Egypt, this image is not reflected in most television programming.

Another study explained how women are portrayed in two major Egyptian newspapers. The study concluded that these papers were mostly portrayed women in traditional ways. The papers emphasized the role of women as mothers and housewives more than professionals and decision makers (Abdel-Rahman, 1981).

In February (2002), The United Arab of Emirrates hosted the Women and Media Forum. Most Arab countries participated in the forum and they all affirmed the need for a media strategy targeting Arab families to bolster the role of women in the development of their communities. Some of the recommendations in this forum called for the recitification of the image of women in the Arab and international media ([www.middleeastwire.com](http://www.middleeastwire.com)).

## **Background**

Understanding of gender roles is related to basic understandings of women's status and society as social change over time (Eickelman, 2002). Therefore, a background about the status of women in Islam, the status of women in the Middle East and the misinterpretation of Islamic laws and the gender-role in Egyptian culture is reported in this chapter.

### **Status of Women in Islam**

In Arabia, before the advent of Islam, the birth of a female child was regarded as a great misfortune and shame; cruel fathers buried their daughters alive. Islam made this

primal injustice a case for the highest court, where in the Day of Judgment, “ the infant female who was buried alive will be asked for what crime she was killed.” (The Qur’an: 81: 8-9).

Prior to Islam in traditional Arabia, a woman was treated as a sex object that could be bought, sold and inherited. From this position of legal incapacity, Islam raised women to a position of influence and prestige in family and society (Sayed, 1977). Islam gave men and women equal rights based on the idea that both of them are of the same family and, therefore, have similar rights and duties, “ O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female.” (The Qur’an 49:13). Since men and women both came from the same essence, they are equal in their humanity. Similarly, neither gender can be superior because it would be a contradiction of equality (Islam, 2000). Also, the Qur’an mentions some of the women with great respect, e.g. the wives of Adam, Abraham, and the mothers of Moses and Jesus. Some of them, e.g. Mary and Sarah, were visited by angels and talked to them.

As a legal entity under Islamic law, a woman’s marriage is not possible without her consent, and where a genuine case is present, she can also divorce her husband (Kayani, 2001). According to the Islamic culture, a Muslim marriage gives a wife the unconditional right to economic support from her husband, regardless of her own financial resources. In addition, she also remains in control of her property including her earned income and she keeps her own family name rather than taking her husband’s. On the other hand, the traditional responsibility of a man is regarded as the “breadwinner.” This has remained not only a principle of Egyptian beliefs but one of the major factors shaping modern family legislation in Egypt (Sigerman & Hoodfar, 1996). However,

Islam permits women to work in public under certain conditions. For instance, Aishah, prophet Mohammed's wife, left the boundaries of the home and performed public services as she sought to turn the Islamic community in the right direction. Aishah occupies a unique position in the history of Islam because she is one of the greatest teachers that Islam ever produced (Kayani, 2001). Furthermore, women were very active during the time of Prophet Mohammed. He encouraged women to be educated, knowledgeable and aware of their own rights. At that time, women participated in wars and also had the right to reveal their own opinions (Sayed, 1977).

Some religious leaders emphasized that Islam recognizes and fosters the natural differences between men and women despite their equality. Therefore, some types of work are more suitable for men and other types for women. Among the first and very highly regarded roles for a woman are maintenance of a home, providing support to her husband, and bearing, raising and teaching of children. Nevertheless, if a woman has the skills to work outside the home for the good of the community, she may do so as long as her family obligations are met (Islam, 2000).

Before speaking about women in Islamic countries, It is important to differentiate between Islam as a religion and the way Islam is interpreted and practiced in different cultures. For example, the culture of some Islamic countries can force women into arranged marriages which they do not want. However, according to Islamic law, this marriage can not be without a woman's consent (Eickelman, 2002).

After September 11 and the Afghani War, understanding women in Islam became an interesting topic for many scholars (CNN, 2001). CNN, for example, presented a report about women in Islam. The report explained that 1500 years ago, women of the



Middle East were given specific legal rights for the first time. The book that gave them those rights was the Islamic holy text “the Qur’an.” The Qur’an says women and men are of equal worth and that woman is made not as man’s rib, as Christian traditions, but just as man was created (CNN, 2001).

Today it is easy to confuse cultural disparities with the religion of Islam, particularly where a strong patriarchal society survives. For example, in Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to drive cars (CNN, 2001). The prohibition is not by law, not by the Qur’an, but because of culture. As a matter of fact, Saudi women are the only ones in the Islamic world not allowed to drive (CNN, 2001).

Many Islamic scholars have pointed out that when Islam and local culture are combined, one must be careful not to look at culture and think it represents the religion. Perhaps that explains that the way women are treated is not always a function of the religion, but varies widely from country to country. Leila Ahmed, a professor at Harvard University who specializes in women’s studies in religion, concluded that “practicing Islam is hugely different from country to country. From Indonesia, through the former Soviet Union, to Saudi Arabia to Morocco, it is hugely different. It really is a combination of the politics of the day and who is in control of the particular country and what did they believe Islam is. Also, the history of those countries and the local cultures have some inputs. However, there is enormous freedoms in Morocco, Egypt, or Jordan where women can be pilots” (CNN, 2001).

Veiled feminists in Egypt, like their counterparts in other Muslim countries, are busy reinterpreting Islamic law and the Qur’an. Beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, at the same time that Egyptian women began to write about and

promote greater freedoms for women. Muslim women realized that their voices and views should reach men and revise Islamic beliefs and gender constructions. Therefore, women in other parts of the Middle East also began to organize women's societies, associations, unions and federations, which led to the formation of women's movements (Meriwether & Tucker, 1999).

### **Women Between Tradition and Change**

Beginning by the 1970s, the adoption of Islamic dress and the affiliation with Islamism express an affirmation of ethical and social customs, particularly with regard to mixing with the opposite sex. Gradually, university and professional women in particular adopted Islamic dress. Many women believe that wearing Islamic dress resulted in a marked difference in the way they were treated in public places since this type of dress protects them from male harassment (Ahmed, 1992).

In Islamic countries, both men and women are expected to be dressed modestly (Al-Olayan & Karande, 2000). The Qur'an addresses the dress code for women explicitly. According to the Qur'an, woman's hair and body should be covered for two reasons. First, to be identified as a muslim woman and second, for not appearing alluring or as a sex object to men. Even though the guidelines provided in the Qur'an might not be strictly followed in the contemporary Arab world, public expectations about modesty in dressing by women is influenced by the Qur'an (Al-Olayan & Karande, 2000).

## **Women in the Middle Eastern Countries**

By the 1980s, in community studies of the Middle East were more likely to depict how women's cultural and social roles are internally differentiated within contemporary societies and how women's images and self-images have been transformed over time (Eickelman, 2002).

Generally speaking, the family in the Middle East conformed to the patriarchal model in which the father had authority and was charged with economically supporting his wife and children. The wife's main duties were confined to the household and to raising children (Bates & Rassam, 2001).

Studies of socialization patterns in the Middle East all emphasize early differentiation in the care and handling of boys and girls (Bates & Rassam, 2001). Although these studies ignore class and educational differences, a number of generalizations that emerge from these studies still have considerable utility. For example, sons are frequently favored at the expense of daughters, and children are taught early on ways of behaving in public that are appropriate to their gender. A village woman with no sons is frequently pitied almost as much as a woman incapable of bearing children at all (Bates & Rassam, 2001).

In several Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, women's freedom of movement within the areas in which they reside, women's dress, women's rights to travel and to work and to choose where to work, are strictly supervised and controlled. For example, in Saudi Arabia there are regular police and moral police, which usually watch over how women dress and where they go and enforce such laws as those that prohibit women from driving cars, wearing short sleeves, or appearing in the street bareheaded. Women in

such countries are subject to the authority of individual men and practically the prisoners of guardians, parents and husbands (Ahmed, 1992).

Another extreme example of the political significance of male control over women in Saudi Arabia today is brought by the ruling elite. Women of the royal family are absolutely forbidden to marry outside the family, and their behavior is strictly monitored (Bates & Rassam, 2001).

Unfortunately, some television programs in the Arab world increasingly depicted women as the root and cause of corruption or as those who forced poor men into accepting bribes, smuggling, or pilfering funds. At the same time, working women were depicted as the cause of lax morality and the disintegration of family and social values (Al-Abd, 1983).

In addition, some of the extrimist religious leaders missinterpret the Islamic Law “shari’a.” For example, , while there is nothing in Islam opposed women’s education, by the first decade of the twentieth century some Iranian religious leaders stood against women’s education. As a result, educationalists women voiced the most articulate defenses of girls’ schools in this debate. They insisted that God had not created men and women of different essences such that one deserved the blessings of education and the other was to remain “bestial.” The Iranian women also emphasized how the Prophet had made it obligatory for all Muslim men and women to seek education. Those women challenged these religious leaders to name a single woman close to the Prophet who was illiterate or ignorant (Abu-Lughod,1998).

The previous example explains that Islam does not insist that women have limited rights or roles in society, but the restrictions placed on women are the result of patriarchal

attitudes in society, which are reinforced either by male religious scholars or sometime by the state. In short, while looking to general patterns and modalities, people must avoid making Islam the primary explanatory factor in gender relations (Bates & Rassam, 2001).

Not long ago, Islamic women's religious activities were generally segregated and received little attention. Now, women's religious presence and practices are becoming more visible and gaining community, media, government, opposition, and feminist attention. "Middle Eastern women are now attempting to develop more accurate interpretations of Islam that better support women's rights and equality" (Meriwether & Tucker, 1999, p. 177-178).

### **The Problem of Interpretation**

Islamic law took shape over several centuries and by a variety of processes. The difficulties attendant upon interpreting and rendering ethical ideas into law were compounded by the Arabs' rapid acquisition of vast foreign territories. During the early period of the establishment of Islam, government appointed judges, who combined the role of judge with that of administrator, tended to apply local laws that varied throughout the territories, informed by the judge's own understanding of the Qur'an (Ahmed, 1992).

Also, among the most influential thinkers on reforms with respect to women was the Egyptian religious thinker, Mohammed Abdu. He argued for the elevation of women's status and changes in marriage practices. "He also emphasized the importance of the need to throw off the ignorance and misinterpretations of Islam that had occurred over the centuries" (Meriwether & Tucker, 1999, p. 177-178).

Since the late 1970s, an increasing number of women have become involved in the field of Islamic family law. They did not only criticize the notion that there ever was a consensus that Islamic law is no longer open to interpretation, but they also underlined the capability of Islamic law to accommodate individual needs and allowing for change. Also, with the development of women's studies as an academic field, led to more research on gender relations (Meriwether & Tucker, 1999).

## **Gender Role in Egyptian Culture**

### **Women in the Pharaonic Age**

The historical importance of the Ancient Egyptian Civilization lies in its human messages and values including all aspects of life. The most important among those values is acknowledgment of women's role in society by drafting a lofty status of the Egyptian women (Abdel-Rahman, 1981).

In the pharaonic religious concepts, legal equality exists, as well as the union of men with women, for the first time by holy matrimony through eternal contracts of marriage. In addition, the Goddess of wisdom were women and among them was Isis, the symbol of fidelity and sincerity (Abdel-Rahman, 1981).

Egyptian women in the pharaonic history had access to various work fields. They were so appreciated that they were appointed to the throne throughout ancient history; among those ancient women were Nefertiti and Cleopatra. Also, women had access to public positions; they worked as judges e.g. Nept. Women worked also in the field of medicine e.g. Psechet, known as the greatest physician during the 4th dynasty. Women

reached the positions of warehouse manager, controller of the royal warehouse, business woman, and as priests ([www.sis.gov.eg/women](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women)).

### **Feminism in Egypt**

Egypt was at the forefront of the changes overtaking the Arab world over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In many ways Egypt was, and continues to be, a mirror of developments in the Middle East (Ahmed, 1992).

Over the first three decades of the twentieth century, feminism became visible intellectually, then organizationally and politically (Ahmed, 1992). At that time, there were two divergent strains of feminism, the first one predominantly the tendencies of the upper and upper-middle classes, which affiliated to the Western-type feminism. The second one was opposed to the Western way, and was searching for a way to articulate female subjectivity and affirmation within a native culture and religious renovation (Shafique, 1960).

Huda Sharawi (1879-1947) led the organizational and political success of the feminist movement and the members of the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU). The goals of EFU were to raise Egyptian women's intellectual and moral level and enable them to attain political, social, and legal equality with men. Connections with Western feminists had always been Sharawi's aim. Also, the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) sent young women to Europe on scholarships beginning in the 1920s (Shafique, 1960).

Malak Hifni Nassef (1886-1918) was articulating a basis of feminism that did not automatically affiliate itself with westernization. The feminist subjects to which Nassef gave priority were education, educational reform, and reform in the marriage laws. In

particular, she denounced polygamy and men's unrestricted license to divorce their wives, and early marriage for girls. She was also opposed to unveiling, not because of conservative reason but because she believed that true modesty should not be determined by the presence or absence of a veil. Nassef believed that adopting Western ideas was neither good nor bad but adoption of Western ways without reference to their suitability in a particular environment was unwise (Ahmed, 1992).

Also, among the most influential thinkers on reforms with respect to women was the Egyptian Muhammad Abdu. He was a religious thinker who argued for the elevation of women's status and changes in marriage practices. He also emphasized the importance of the need to throw off the ignorance and misinterpretations of Islam that had occurred over the centuries. During the 1880s, Abdu addressed the need for reforms with respect to women at various points ([www.sis.gov.eg/women](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women)).

### **Education**

Many studies have concentrated on the impact of greater educational opportunities for women on women's roles and the image of women in society. In fact, access to education is in many ways a prerequisite for change in women's status throughout the region of the Middle East. The higher proportion of women in school in recent years indicates the capability and commitment of most countries of the region to provide for women's education, and popular pressures to do so (Eickelman, 2002).

By the late 1830s, the Educational Council of Egypt issued a statement declaring itself impressed by women's important contribution to the progress of civilizations in modern societies and recommended public education for women (Fernea, 1985). In the



1890s, the call for more education for women and for reforms affecting their status was clearly audible. Women began to present their own case in the newspapers and magazines. In 1892, the first magazine for women, edited by a woman, was published (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

University education for women started in 1930. In 1933, the first female university graduates from the Egyptian university took their degrees. After the nationalist revolution (1952), women's participation and enrollment in higher education rose rapidly and at a much faster pace than men's (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Today, women are practicing in all disciplines and are effective in health care. Egyptian medical women represent 35% to 45% of the staff of faculties of medicine and about one-third of all medical graduates. They have contributed to the improvement of health, particularly in maternal and child health, and are role models for young girls in rural areas (JAMWA, 2000).

One of the few women writers of television serials, Fathiya al-Assal, uses her serials to present progressive views on social issues. She stated in her writings that the issue is how women can be liberated economically, politically, and intellectually, then they will be automatically liberated from men (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

### **Workplace**

In the 1830s, women had been medical practitioners and recipients of government salaries (JAMWA, 2000). Beginning in the early 1930s, when the first women graduated from Fuad University, they began to enter the professions including law, journalism, medicine, and university teaching. A striking number of those pioneers went on to

become leaders in their fields and became well-known names (Ahmed, 1992). This women's access to education resulted in a radical change in the number of employed women and their pattern of employment. By the second half of the twentieth century, women entered all arenas of white-collar and professional work. The only positions they have not occupied are judge and head of state (Ahmed, 1992).

However, there has been a backlash against working women, which many analysts relate to high levels of unemployment for men. In 1985, a draft law was presented to Parliament calling for women to quit their jobs and keep half of their salaries. The rationale behind the draft law was that working women were neglecting the care and upbringing of their children. Also, in 1989 Anis Mansour, an establishment journalist in the official government newspaper Al-Ahram, discussed in his article the relationship between careerist mothers and unhappy children who turn to drugs and deviation (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Anthropologists pointed out that changing economic fortunes have a significant impact on how ideologies of gender are expressed. They explained that when large numbers of Arabic males emigrated to the Arab Gulf for high-paying jobs, significant numbers of women entered the work force in their own countries. When the men were forced to return after the 1990-1991 Gulf War, women were removed from much of the economic work force to make way for the returning men. Usually the justification invoked for this policy shift was often religious (Eickelman, 2002).

Thus, many Islamists argue that women should not work outside the home. They believe that God gave them the noblest of occupations, which is raising His creatures. They also regards women's care of men as more primary than their reproductive task.

Many Islamist thinkers outline women's duties as including serving their husbands, raising children and keeping house (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Moreover, not only the state restrictions, economic reasons or some Islamic thinkers who are emphasizing these traditional roles for women, also these traditional roles are sometimes emphasized by women themselves. Amina Al-Said, a leading feminist, has criticized modern Egyptian women for their passivity. She attributed the passivity of the current generation to the relative facility with which they grew up in an era where education for women is taken for granted, and where jobs are readily available and family resistance to their working is minimal. According to her, this generation did not have to fight for these privileges the way early feminists did (Fernea, 1985).

### **Contribution to Political Life**

Recent United Nations statistics show that women occupy 4% of Egypt's parliamentary seats. Also, about 6% of decision-making positions in government are held by women (UNSD, 2000). The United Nations Statistics Division indicated that women's wages in manufacturing are 74% of men's wages in Egypt. However, this percentage must be interpreted with great caution. Earnings are very much dependent on the number of hours worked. Therefore, this factor must be kept in mind when interpreting the wage ratio, particularly where female workers generally work a much smaller number of hours than male workers (UNSD, 2000).

According to the 1956 constitution, women were given equal rights to participate as both candidates and electors in legislative, local, professional and trade union elections. In the mid 60s, women were admitted to the Cabinet as Minister of Social

Affairs. Ever since, there have been at least two women ministers in the Cabinet ([www.sis.gov.eg/women](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women)).

According to law No.21/1973, 30 seats were assigned as a minimum to women in the People's Assembly. During the first half of the 80s, women's memberships in the Assembly grew considerably. Since the early 60s, women have been involved in diplomatic services, and many of them have reached the position of Ambassador. Additionally, Egyptian women have been playing a role in various political parties, professional syndicates and trade union organizations. The forum of the National Women's Committee in December 1993 has supported women's roles in all fields, chiefly political participation ([www.sis.gov.eg/women](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women)).

### **Participation in International Conferences**

Presence of Egyptian women in international forums dates back to 1923, when Hoda Sharawi attended the International Women's Federation in Rome. In 1994, Egypt held the first National Conference on Egyptian Women. The conference called for boosting women's role in Egyptian political life ([www.sis.gov.eg/women/confer](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women/confer)).

The second conference, held in 1996, also called for enhancing women's political role and appointing women to positions traditionally restricted to men, particularly those related to decision making. As the head of the national women's committee, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, stated that the Second National Conference on Women represented an important turning point in the history of Egyptian women. This conference stressed the necessity of taking steps that empower women to participate in economic development and attempting to achieve their full employment so as to become an effective element

raising the productivity of the Egyptian society alongside men in the different fields and activities. These preparations will also help overcome the problems of international economic competition in the 21st century ([www.sis.gov.eg/women/confer](http://www.sis.gov.eg/women/confer)).

The Third National Women Conference was held under the title of “Development of the Country Woman.” This conference issued a lot of important decisions and recommendations at the end of its sessions. Among these recommendations are:

- Urging adult women to enroll in electoral lists.
- Raising women’s awareness of their constitutional and legal rights.
- Reviewing materials and books to ensure the principle of equality between men and women.
- Encouraging political parties to have women running for candidacy in parliamentary and local elections.
- Considering any legislation that discriminates against women or undermines their rights.
- Urging the press and media to improve the image of women and display honorable examples of women.

## **The Egyptian Media**

### **Newspapers**

The Egyptian press is the most developed in the Arab world, and Cairo is the largest publishing center of the Middle East. As of 1993, 263 licenced newspapers are published in Egypt (Kamalipour & Hamid, 1994). The most important newspaper is the

authoritative *Al Ahram* (daily circulation 900,000), which often reflects the views of the government (SIS, 1992). Although the country enjoys considerable freedom of the press, all newspapers and periodicals are under governmental supervision and partial governmental ownership, as are all publishing houses. However, the BBC in its country profiles online indicated that Egypt is ranked as “not free” by analysts at the international media freedom watchdog. The BBC added that “there is some political control of the media and regulation but little evidence of direct repressive action against individual journalists” ([www. news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)).

### **Radio**

Radio broadcasting in Egypt started in the 1920s with several private commercial stations, mostly located in Cairo. In 1934, radio stations came under government control. Now, Egyptian broadcasting consists of seven networks that broadcast about 235 hours and 42 minutes daily. These networks consist of 16 radio stations, and seven of them are commercial (The Egyptian Radio and TV Yearbook, 1999/2000).

### **News Agency**

Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) is considered to be the official press agency of the Egyptian government. MENA started in 1956 with only 40 employees, by 1989, it employed over 1,200, 400. The agency serves other countries in

the Arab world, in fact, several Arab news agencies relay their reports through MENA (SIS, 1992).

### **Television**

In 1959, the Egyptian government accepted an offer by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) to establish a television broadcast facility. The First Channel started in 1960. This channel airs a variety of programs such as news, specials, religion, serials, and films aimed at a national audience. According to the Radio and TV yearbook (1999/2000), this channel is not only the pioneering one but also the most highly viewed one among Egyptians. There are more seven TV channels, and all of them are controlled by the state's Egypt Radio Television Union (ERTU) (The Egyptian Radio and TV Yearbook, 1999/2000).

### **Satellite**

Egypt was the first Arab nation to have its own satellite, Nilesat ([www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)). For the first time in 1990, The Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC), a commercial station, started to cover Africa, the Arab world, and the Mediterranean coast. Now, ESC reaches all over the world and broadcasts the programs of the First Channel, including selected programs from Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth channels (The Egyptian Radio and TV Yearbook, 1999/2000).

### **Media Regulations**

According to the existing rules, political parties, as well as religious groups or private persons, are free to publish newspapers in Egypt. Nevertheless, the Egyptian media overall face major problems such as state ownership and control over broadcast media and over a large number of the national newspapers (Kamalipour & Hamid, 1994).

### **Women and Mass Media**

Women have played a tremendous role in modern mass media. According to the Egyptian radio and television yearbook (1999/2000), women started to hold highly ranked positions in the Egyptian media for long time. For example, all of the following positions are held by women, and some of them were held by women for more than one period. These positions are the Head of the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC), Head of the Egyptian Television and Broadcasting Union, Head of the Specialized Channels, Head of the Egyptian Radio and each of the five major radio networks in Egypt is supervised by a woman.

### **Advertising in Egypt**

Television is watched by most Egyptians. Cable television is not available in Egypt. Television advertisements reach and influence wide audiences. As a matter of fact, television is the most easily accessible medium for the general population. About ninety percent of the population has television access. Egyptian radio and television are



under government control. Television is government owned and maintains fixed and non-negotiable prices for advertising (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994).

Commercials are available in :10, :20, :30, :45 and :60 lengths; 80% of all commercials are :30 long. Egyptian TV has 3 to 4 advertising breaks daily in specific times (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994).

In respect to advertising, Egyptian television has an “Informal Code of Ethics,” which was adopted by the Egyptian Radio and TV Union (ERTU). The first article of this code indicates that advertisements shall not include any material conflicting with religious or moral principals and values, the national public policy system, public morals, or any element that would lead to the provocation or disturbance of the society or which would harm the best interest of the nation before the other nations. Also, the eighth article of this code emphasized the necessity of advertisements to avoid all images of violence, roughness or indecency (SIS, 1992).

Advertising of alcohol beverages and medicine are banned in Egypt. Also, for religious reasons the code of dress indicates that no sexy dress is allowed on television. Cigarette advertising is banned from all broadcast media, however, it is allowed in all print and outdoor media with a health warning. Advertising for children should not affect their personality or cause any mental and physical harm (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994).

### **Advertising Agencies**

The liberalization of the Egyptian economy along with the extension of the private sector has had a favorable effect on the further development of the advertising sector.

This has led to a rapid increase in the number of advertising agencies, both state and private, which has resulted in a highly competitive sector. Among the top five advertising agencies in Egypt: Direct Advertising, Animation and Tarek Nour Advertising (SIS,1992).

In addition, Most multinational advertising agencies have offices in Egypt including Impact-BBDO Egypt, D'Arcy Egypt, Publicis-Graphics, Team/Young & Rubicam, Saatchi & Saatchi, Ama Leo Burnett, and DDB As part of DDB (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994). Those agencies supporting clients such as Pepsi, Procter & Gamble and Nestle. (Leo Burnett Worldwide Advertising, 1994).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes in detail the planning of this research. A description of data collection and analysis methodology for this study will also be reported. The flow of this chapter will be as follows: purpose of the study, research approach, research questions, research objectives, sampling plan, data collection, research instrument and coding sheet.

#### **Purpose of The Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe in detail how women and men are portrayed in Egyptian television commercials. This study will also attempt to compare the findings from this study with existing studies of the portrayal of women and men in U.S. and other countries' television ads, as reported in the literature. It will also examine the influence of Egyptian cultural values on the depiction of women in advertising. As Sengupta (1995) concluded that "content analysis of television commercials showed that advertisements are to a large extent a reflection of society's culture and behaviors" (P.314).

Comparing the findings of this study with the findings of U.S. commercials, as reported in literature, will help to provide an accurate picture of the differences between the two nations in the way they depict gender in media.

## **Research Approach**

As noticed through the literature review, research into cultural values reflected in advertising content has gained great interest from many researchers. Most of these studies utilize content analysis.

Quantitative content analysis will be the research methodology used for this study as well. Content analysis is defined as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 15). Content analysis is a specific research approach used frequently in all areas of the media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Shoemaker & Reese (1996) indicated that studying content helps us to predict the impact of media, which are television commercials in this study, on its audience. In fact, many content analysis over the years have examined the portrayal of women in broadcast television (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

Also, the method of content analysis is popular with mass media researchers because it is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media. Most studies that examined gender portrayal in television commercials were based on content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Kerlinger (1986) highlighted the systematic characteristic of content analysis, which means that the content to be analyzed is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules. Thus, content analysis is objective, which means that the researcher’s bias should not enter into the findings.

For this study, 18 hours of the Egyptian First Channel prime time television commercials, PSAs and promotional announcements were analyzed. Advertisements

depicting animals or cartoon figures were not included in this study. Target commercials will be product/service advertisements and public service announcements.

### **Research Questions**

There are three research questions that this study attempts to answer:

1. What is the content of Egyptian prime time television commercials in terms of gender-role portrayal?
2. Does the portrayal of women in the commercials reflect the Egyptian culture or stresses stereotypical roles that no longer exist?
3. What are the differences between Egypt and the United States and other countries' advertising in terms of gender portrayal in television commercials?

### **Research Objectives**

The objective of this research is to examine the portrayal of women in advertising by analyzing television commercials from Egypt and comparing them to other countries as reported in the literature. This study will extend the body of cross-cultural studies regarding gender portrayal in advertising. By analyzing the content of 306 television commercials recorded from Egyptian television, researchers' information about Egypt will be based on objective facts presented by the data.

### **Sampling Plan**

For this study, a non-random sample of 18 hours of First Channel prime time (7-10 p.m.) programming was videotaped during the last six days of May 2001. This resulted in a total of 306 commercials including repeats or 101 distinct commercials. The commercials during that period were not influenced by any special events or holidays.

As mentioned previously, the First Channel was the first TV channel in Egypt started on July 21, 1960. As the rest of Egyptian television channels, First Channel is under government control. The researcher chose this channel particularly because it reaches 95% of the Egyptian households. After launching the Egyptian satellite in 1990, this channel reached all parts of Egypt and many different countries around the world. In 1992, the program for this channel used to start at 10:00 a.m. and last till 12:00 p.m. every day. By the year 2000, the program time expanded to 23 hours a day. This daily program starts with some readings of the Qur'an followed by the national anthem and ends with national anthem and the Qur'an. According to Islamic religious, Muslims have to pray five times a day. Therefore, announcing for prayer times cut in programming five times a day. The station profile is general, and 90 minutes of its daily program is for commercials.

## **Data Collection**

### **Coders**

Two graduate students in the mass communications program were trained to perform the content analysis. One student was an English-speaking American and another was both an English and Arabic speaking . Since most of the commercials were in Arabic, the Arabic student translated each commercial into English for the American student. Both coders evaluated those television commercials separately using a pencil and coding sheet. Disagreements were noted and resolved, yielding one set of data.

### **Intercoder Reliability**

The intercoder reliability was calculated using the Holsti's (1996) method. Data were analyzed using the SPSS program and the chi-square test was used to define the significance of data differences.

## **Research Instrument**

The instrument of analysis used by Fullerton & Kendrick (2000) in their study of U.S. Spanish-language television commercials was used in this study. The instrument employed variables compiled from different published studies, which is explained in the table below.

### **The Compilation of the Coding Scheme**

Authors	Year of Publishing	Coding Schemes
McArthur & Resko	1975	Primary role
Goffman	1976	Male/Female relationship roles
Schneider & Schneider	1979	Primary character
Soly & Kurzbard	1986	Sexual content, Sexual contact and Degree of dress
Bretl & Cantor	1988	Setting and Primary narrator
Craig	1992	Characters present

### **Primary role**

According to McArthur & Resko's study (1975), the central figure role categories were "spouse; parent; homemaker; worker; professional; real-life celebrity; interviewer or narrator; boyfriend/girlfriend; and other." In this study, the concept of central figures were replaced by the "primary role" concept, with a few changes. The present study cut down these categories into "professional; homemaker; lover; parent; and other."



### **Male and female relationship role**

The present study used Goffman's (1976) scale of male/female roles. This scale describes whether the commercial portrays either men or women in stereotypical male-dominant or female-dominant or in equal roles.

### **Primary character**

In this study, the same guideline that has been set by Schneider & Schneider (1979) was adopted. The primary character was identified as the person who was on-camera for a minimum of three seconds or said at least one line of dialogue.

### **Sexual content, Sexual Contact and Degree of dress**

Sexual content was defined by Soley & Kurzbard (1986) as "advertisements containing verbal sexual references, those depicting male/female contact and portraying suggestively clad, partially clad and nude models" (p. 48). For sexual content categories are "visual sexual images; verbal sexual references; both and none." For sexual contact categories are "eye contact; holding hands; other contacts and none." In this study, coders were instructed to record the highest level of sexual contact or content shown.

Also, degree of dress was coded according to Soley & Kurzbard's (1986) guidelines. However, some changes of these categories have been made for the present study. In this study, "seductive" became "suggestively clad" and "nude" is omitted since nudity or any indecent action is banned in Egyptian TV for religious reasons. According to Soley & Kurzbard, those who dressed normally were coded as demure, those with open blouses exposing chest areas or those with extremely tight clothing were considered

suggestively clad, and those in bathing suits or showing bare shoulders or stomachs were coded as partially clad.

In addition, type of dress in the present study was coded, too. The categories of dress type are “ traditional, modern or veiled.” Traditional dress included long colorful dresses, with a little cover on the hair, and are usually worn by countryside women. Modern dress is typically Western and European style clothing. Veiled dress is the modesty type of dress that Muslim women may wear. With this particular type of dress, women’s bodies and hair should be covered.

### **Setting**

Bretl & Cantor (1988) classified setting into certain categories. These categories were used with only one minor change. In this study, the “unknown” category was replaced by “other/unclear.” The categories are “Kitchen; bathroom; other room in house; outdoors at home; outdoors away from home; restaurant/bar; business; school; social; multiple settings; and other/unclear.”

### **Primary Narrator**

“Sex of Narrator” categories developed by Bretl & Cantor (1988) were also adopted in this study. There are only two differences between both studies. First, they used “unclear” category; instead this study used “both.” Second, this study added “none” for no narrator commercial. The categories are “Female, Male, Both and none.”

### **Characters Present**

The Craig (1992) categories of characters present were used in this study with a few changes. The categories in the present study are “no characters; all male adult; all female adult; all adults/mixed sex; all children or teens; male adult w/children/teens; female adult w/children/teens, and mixture of ages and genders.”

### **Coding Sheet**

A standard coding sheet was designed to analyze the content of each commercial under this study. Based on the previous coding scheme, each coding sheet consists of five pages. The first page includes information about the station, type of spot, length of spot, language, product, characters present, setting, male/female roles, primary narrator, sexual content, sexual contact, and appeal.

On the second page, information on the first primary female characters is presented. Similarly, on the third page information about the second primary female characters is also represented. The categories of these two pages include the primary role, lowest degree of dress, type of dress, race/ ethnicity, age, roles, consumer role, and role in relation to the product.

In the race/ethnicity column, different groups are classified: Arabic, White/European, Black/African, Asian and others/unknown. In the roles column, different roles are displayed and are checked if any of them apply to the character. These roles are: parent, responsible for home, homemaker, involved in household chores, adjuncts to other sex, autonomous individuals, advising opposite sex, professional, lover and other.

In the consumer role column, categories are consumer of high-ticket item, consumer of sex appeal item, consumer of cleanliness items for home or self, and consumer of other item.

In the column of role in relation to product, categories are product representative, product authority based on use, product authority but not based on use, and none. The same chart is presented on the fourth and fifth pages for two primary male characters in the commercial. The only difference is in the categories of type of dress, where covered hair item is deleted for male characters. A sample of the coding sheet is included in the appendix A.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

For this study, 306 commercials including repeats or 101 distinct commercials were analyzed, and the findings are reported in this chapter. The commercials included product/service advertisements, station promotions and public service announcements.

These 306 commercials yielded a total of 337 primary characters, which resulted in a total of 7,884 judgments. Disagreements between intercoders were solved and according to Holsti's (1969) formula, intercoder reliability was .956. Each of the three questions of this study will be answered through the results of the data analysis. The findings are listed below.

#### **Research Question One**

What is the content of Egyptian prime time television commercials in terms of gender-role portrayal?

#### **(1) Commercial Content**

##### **Length**

Of the 306 commercials, 245 were paid product or service spots, 26 were station promotional announcements and 35 were public service announcements. Unlike U.S. television spots, which are generally 60, 30, or 15 seconds in length (Fullerton, 2000), the

Egyptian television spots varied greatly in length with 30-seconds being most common (29.7%), followed by 60-seconds (11.4%), 20-seconds (10.8%) and 40-seconds (7.8%). The remaining spots were at various lengths from two to 280 seconds and all the longest ones were PSAs, for example, the length of 3.9% of the ads were 215 seconds and 0.3% were 280 seconds and all of these spots were PSAs.

### **Language**

Most of the commercials were in Arabic language (89.5%). Almost six percent did not contain a spoken language but used only music. About four percent were in English and only one was broadcast in both Arabic and English. See Table 1

**Table 1.** Language in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
Arabic	274	89.5
Neither	19	6.2
English	12	4.0
Both	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	306	100.0

### **Commercial Sponsors**

The 306 commercials represented a variety of sponsors. Entertainment such as movies, music, concerts, books and magazines are the most prominent (35% N=107) followed by packaged food including butter, oil, cookies and candy (11.4% N=35). Other sponsors included household cleaning goods (11. 1% N=34), PSAs (9.5% N=29), services such as phone cards and banking services (8.8% N=27), personal hygiene products (8.5% N=26), soft drinks such as cola, juice, tea, or coffee (6.9% N=21), durable

goods such as appliances and apartments (5.9% N=18) and other (2.6% N=8). There was only one ad for automobile.

Most (68%) of these commercials were for Egyptian products. About 16% advertised imported products, and the origin of about 16% of the advertised products was not mentioned “Unknown.” See Table 2.

**Table 2.** Product Origin in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Product origin</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Egyptian	208	68
Unknown	50	16.3
Imported	48	15.7
Total	306	100

### **Narration**

The majority of the advertisements used only male narrators (61.1%). About fourteen percent (14.1%) were narrated by females and slightly more than one-tenth of the spots (11.8%) were narrated by both men and women. Almost 13% had no voices, just music or images and words on screen.

See Table 3.

**Table 3.** Voice of Narrator in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Narrator</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
Male	187	61.1
Female	43	14.1
None	40	13.1
Both	36	11.8
<b>Total</b>	306	100

### **Character Gender**

Women portrayed more frequently than men in the Egyptian television commercials. Of the 337 codable characters, 55.2% were women and 44.8% were men.

### **Character Mix**

Over one-fourth of the commercials featured an all-adult mixed-gender (28%), with an almost equal amount containing no human characters (27.8%). Almost one-fifth of the spots contained characters with a mix of ages and genders (18%) and an all female adult cast (10%), followed by an all male adult cast (9.8%), children or teens cast ( 2.9%) and females with children (2.6%). Only two spots showed a male character with children. See Table 4.

**Table 4.** Character Mix in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Characters appearing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
All adult/mixed gender	86	28.1
No human characters	85	27.8
Mix of ages and genders	55	18.0
All female adult	31	10.1
All male adult	30	9.8
All children or teens	9	2.9
Female adult with kids	8	2.6
Male adult with kids	2	0.7
<b>Total</b>	306	100



### **Setting**

Since 27.8% of the commercials featured with no characters and only focused on the product, almost one-third of the commercials (33%) featured in unclear or other settings, where advertisers focused either on images of the products or words on screen with clear backgrounds. Followed by commercials taking place in multiple settings (25.8%), then outdoors away from a house (22.5%), other room in house (6.5%), in kitchen (4.6%), in social settings (2.6%), in a business (2%), in a school (1.6%), in the bathroom (1%) and outside at home (.3%). See Table 5.

**Table 5.** Setting in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
Other/Unclear	101	33
Multiple settings	79	25.8
Outdoors away from home	69	22.5
Other room in house	20	6.5
Kitchen	14	4.6
Social	8	2.6
Business	6	2.0
School	5	1.6
Bathroom	3	1
Outdoors at home	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	306	100

### **Goffman Sex Roles**

Using Goffman's (1976) scale of male/female roles, more than half of the commercials (61.4%) did not feature male/female in interacting relationship. About 12% of the commercials portrayed men or women in traditional roles. Less than six percent of the commercials found men and women in reverse roles and about twenty one percent featured equal roles and the remaining 1% featured other roles. See Table 6.

**Table 6.** Goffman Sex-Role Portrayals in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Role</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
None	188	61.4
Equality	64	20.9
Traditional	37	12.1
Reverse	18	5.9
Other	3	1

### **Sexual Content and Contact**

About 88% of the commercials did not feature sexual content or sexual contact. Coders were instructed to record the highest level of sexual contact shown. Within the 39 commercials containing some form of sexual contact 3.9% contained eye contact, 4.2% holding hands and 4.6% other contact such as hugging or dancing.

### **Degree of Dress**

Degree of dress as defined by Soley & Krzbard's (1986) as those dressed normally were coded as not sexually clad, those dressed provocatively were coded as suggestively clad and those in bathing suits or showing shoulders or stomachs were coded as partially clad. In this study, most models were fully dressed (86.9%), and none of the characters was coded as partially clad. See Table 7.

**Table 7.** Degree of Dress in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Degree of dress</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
Not sexually clad	293	86.9
Suggestively clad	44	13.1
Partially clad	0	0
<b>Total</b>	337	100

Women were significantly ( $\chi^2 = 37.02$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .000$ ) more likely to be suggestively clad than men with almost one-fourth of the female characters in suggestively clad clothing. See Table 8.

**Table 8.** Degree of Dress of Primary Characters in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Degree of dress</b>	<b>Female 55.2% (N=186)</b>	<b>Male 44.8% (N= 151)</b>
Fully/normally clothed	76.9% (N=143)	99.3% (N=150)
Suggestively clad	23.1% (N= 43)	.7% (N= 1)
Partially clad	0	0
<b>Total</b>	100% N=186	100% N=151

### **Type of Dress**

Most of the commercials featured models wearing Western or European style clothing (91.1%) and none of the female models featured with covered hair. However, about 8.9% of the spots featured models with traditional Arabic clothing. See Table 9.

**Table 9.** Type of Dress in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Type of dress</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent of commercials</b>
Modern/European	307	91.1
Traditional	30	8.9
<b>Total</b>	337	100

### **Race**

Of the 337 primary characters, 96% were Arabic, about 1% were white European, only one character was Asian and others were 2.4%. See Table 10.

**Table 10.** Race in Egyptian Television Commercials

Race	Frequency	Percent of commercials
Arabic	324	96.1
Other/Unknown	8	2.4
White European	4	1.2
Asian	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Role of Primary Characters**

Men and women were statistically significantly different in terms of the roles of the primary characters. Men were more likely to be cast as professionals ( $\chi^2 = 12.988$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Men were significantly less likely to be cast as a homemaker ( $\chi^2 = 11.75$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .001$ ), parent ( $\chi^2 = 8.716$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .003$ ) or performing household chores ( $\chi^2 = 4.099$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .043$ ). However, 17.2% of women were portrayed as autonomous individuals, which is significantly higher than men ( $\chi^2 = 8.55$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .003$ ). A high percentage of the characters had roles that were classified as “other.” These characters were product representatives, models or children, see Table 11.

**Table 11.** Roles of Adult Primary Characters in Egyptian Television Commercials

Role	Female % (N=)	Male % (N=)
Parent*	28% (N=52)	14.6% (N=22)
Responsible for the Home	9.7% (N=18)	6.6% (N=10)
Homemaker*	11.8% (N=22)	2% (N=3)
Performing household chores*	9.7% (N=18)	4% (N=6)
Advising the other sex	3.2% (N=6)	4.6% (N=7)
Autonomous individuals*	17.2% (N=32)	6.6% (N=10)
Professional*	11.3% (N=21)	26.5% (N=40)
Non-professional worker	4.8% (N=9)	4.0% (N=6)
Lover/spouse	8.1%(15)	3.3 (N=5)
Other*	33.9% (N=63)	50.3% (N=76)

\* $p < .05$

\*\* Characters could be coded into more than one role category

### **Age of Characters**

For adult characters, there was a significant difference between the ages of the male and female characters with women being generally younger than their male counterparts ( $\chi^2 = 23.052$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Women were more likely to be between the ages of 21 and 30 while men were more likely to be between the ages of 31 and 40. Only 3.6% of the primary characters were teens or children with more girls than boys. See Table 12.

**Table 12.** Age of Primary Characters in Egyptian Television Commercials

<b>Age</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Under 20	5.4% (N=10)	1.3 (N=2)
21-30	53.2% (N=99)	33.1 (N=50)
31-40	31.2% (N=58)	49.7 (N=75)
41-50	3.8% (N=7)	2.6 (N=4)
Over 50	6.5% (N=12)	13.2 (N=20)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(N=186)</b>	<b>(N= 151)</b>

### **Research Question Two**

Does the portrayal of women in the commercials reflect the Egyptian culture or stresses stereotypical roles that no longer exist?

#### **(2) Commercial Content as a Reflection of Egyptian Culture**

Advertising in Egypt and throughout the world, portrays a society that really does not exist in any culture (Courtney and Whipple, 1983). Despite the early women's movement and all the struggles that early feminists had to face, gender inequality still exists in advertising. While the contemporary economic demands have pushed more women into the work force (Fernea, 1985), the findings of this study pointed out that

Egyptian commercials contain stereotype sex-role portrayals. These commercials tended to connect women with household chores and cleanliness items and also to feature them more than men as parents and homemakers. About 28% of women were cast as parents compared to 14.6% of men. Almost 12% (N=22) of women were cast as homemakers, while only 2% (N=3) of men were portrayed as a homemaker. About 11% of the professional characters were women compared to 26.5% for men. The Narration for the commercials were mostly dominated by male voices (61.1%) compared to only 14.1% by women.

Also, the findings of this study indicated that women were portrayed more often than men as autonomous individuals. Perhaps these findings reflecting the ways in which Egyptian women are reacting to the social changes created by the early women movement and the rapid development taking place in the Middle East today (Fernea, 1985). Therefore, according to Goffman's (1976) scale of male/female roles 61.4% of the commercials avoided featuring any gender roles, followed by equal roles 20.9%, traditional roles 12.1% and reverse roles 5.9%.

Analyzing the model's type and degree of dress has revealed interesting findings. Although Egypt is considered to be an Islamic country where women are expected to wear modest dress that covers their bodies and hair, in contrast, none of the commercials portrayed women in Islamic dress, the majority of women were in modern Western European dress (92%) and about 8% in traditional Egyptian dress, which is mostly wore by countryside women. Both men and women characters were mostly appeared in not sexually clad dress (87%), However, 23.1% of women were appeared suggestively clad compared to only one male who appeared in tight and suggestively clad clothing.

Also, more than 37% of the commercials used price appeal to encourage customers purchasing products. Using price appeal is consistent with both the current recession in the Egyptian economy and individual's low income. Speaking about individual's low income explains why 35% of the commercials were for entertainment, while only 0.3% was for autos.

Based on the same economic reasons, almost half of the characters in the commercials (49.5%) were casted as product authorities based on use in their relation to product role to lessen chances of risk of using the product.

### **Research Question Three**

In terms of gender portrayal in television commercials, what are the differences, if any, between Egypt from one side and the U.S. and other countries from the other side?

### **(3) Comparisons with U.S. and Foreign Television Advertising**

This study only focused on Egyptian television commercials but some comparisons can be done between Egypt's and other country's commercials. However, comparing this study with other studies, as reported in the literature, that used different types of instruments, should be watched carefully.

Similar to studies that conducted on U.S. television commercials during the past three decades (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Bretl & Cantor, 1988 and Craig, 1992), the findings of this study reveal stereotypical sex roles for men and women with men more likely to appear in professional roles and women more likely to be shown as parents and doing household chores.

In addition, Egyptian television commercials were similar to U.S. television commercials in other ways. For example, in both countries' advertisements women are generally portrayed as being young, between 21-30 years (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Fullerton and Kendrick, 2000) and more likely to be sexually clad than men (Soley & Kurzbard, 1986). However, females are not likely to be partially clad or nude in Egyptian commercials.

Also, the primary narrators were predominately by males in both the U.S. (Bretl & Cantor, 1988 and Craig, 1992) and Egypt. Over sixty percent of the Egyptian commercials had male narrators, while only fourteen percent of the commercials narrated by females. Egyptian commercials contained about the same level of sexual content (11.1%) as a recent U.S. advertising study (Fullerton and Kendrick, 2000).

Unlike the U.S. commercials, in this study, entertainment commercials are the most prominent in Egypt compared to automobile commercials in the United States. Moreover, women were portrayed as primary characters more often than men, which is consistent with other foreign studies (Mwangi, 1996 and Zhou, 1997). U.S. television commercials generally have a higher percentage of male characters than female characters (McArthur & Resko, 1975).

Since this study utilized the same instrument that Fullerton and Kendrick's (2000) content analysis of Spanish language television advertising and also Fullerton's (2000) content analysis of Uzbek ads, direct comparisons between the findings are easy to make.

Generally speaking, Spanish-language ads, Uzbek ads, and Egyptian ads are similar, particularly in terms of presence of more women than men as primary characters; women being younger than men; women more often being featured in domestic roles and



men in working roles; women being more likely to be suggestively clad than men; and the dominance of male narrators.

In the Egyptian spots, there was less sexually explicit content and contact (11%) than in U.S. Spanish-language television (23.9%) or in Uzbekistani (19%) spots. Women in Egyptian commercials (23%) were more often suggestively clad than women in Spanish-language ads (15%), but less often than those in Uzbekistani commercials (33%) and none of the female characters was partially clad or nude. However, it should be noted that the suggestively clad models tended to appear in commercials for entertainment products, such as movies or music, as belly-dancers or in love scenes.

In the Egyptian spots, about 28% of the commercials aired with no characters compared to ten percent of the U.S. spots (Fullerton and Kendrick's, 2000). This finding is consistent with Al-Olyan and Karande's (2000) findings, which found that people are depicted less frequently in Arabic ads than in U.S. ads. However, Al-Olyan and Karande's study revealed that when female models are used in Arabic advertisements they are shown wearing long dresses covering their body for religious reasons. This is inconsistent with the current study where over ninety percent of the female models were portrayed in Western European-style. However, it should be noted that Al-Olyan and Karande's study analyzed magazine advertisements in Egypt and other Arab countries while this study examined television advertising.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

This research study was designed to present a description of Egyptian television commercials by evaluating the gender-role portrayal and comparing it to gender roles in Egyptian society. This study provides a description of advertising content from a part of the world about which little is known (Abernathy & Franke, 1996). Also, this study conducted a comparative study between Egypt and the United States, as well as other countries, to determine the differences in terms of gender portrayal in television commercials.

For this study, 18 hours of Egyptian prime time television commercials were analyzed. The output of the First Channel, the most popular Egyptian television channel, was videotaped between the times of 7:00-10:00 p.m., “prime time,” for the last six days of May 2001. Two different coders coded the commercials. Findings were compared to U.S. and some other countries’ advertisements as described in the literature. The content of 101 commercials, which yielded to a total of 337 primary characters, was analyzed and each of the three questions of this study was answered through the results of the data analysis.

A coding schema developed by Fullerton & Kendrick (2000) in their study of U.S. Spanish-language television commercials was used as the instrument in this study. A

standard coding sheet was designed to analyze the content of each commercial under this study. Based on the previous coding scheme, each coding sheet contains a total of eighteen factors to describe the commercials followed by eighteen pieces of data for up to two primary female adult characters and two primary male adult characters. Two graduate students in the mass communication program were trained to perform the content analysis. Both coders evaluated those television commercials separately. Data were analyzed and recorded in chapter four.

The findings of this study are consistent with other gender role studies conducted in the United States and other countries. This study pointed out that Egyptian commercials contain stereotyped sex-role portrayals. These commercials tended to connect women with household chores and cleanliness items and also to feature them more than men as parents and homemakers. Also, in Egyptian television commercials women were portrayed younger than men and men were twice as likely to be shown as professionals and males mostly dominated the primary narrators.

Although Egyptian television commercials are not reflecting the whole picture of the Egyptian culture, these commercials tended to respond, to some extent, to the changes that happened in Egyptian in the last five decades. Generally speaking, commercials under this study reflect advertisers' acknowledgment towards the changing roles of women in current society. Thus, in Goffman's scale of male/female relationship, about 61% of the commercials did not feature any relationships between the two genders; followed by 21% featured equality roles compared to 12% featured traditional roles. In fact, one surprising finding revealed that about 6% of the commercials portrayed reverse

sex-roles. Not only females appeared more frequently than males in this study, but also women were portrayed more than men as autonomous individuals.

At the same time, women were mostly portrayed in modern Western European dress and mostly appeared in not sexually clad dress. While Islamic dress is becoming more popular now in Egypt, none of the commercial portrayed women in an Islamic dress.

In addition, in a country that strictly inhibits sexual expression, about one-fourth of female characters in Egyptian commercials were suggestively clad, and more than 10% of the ads contained sexual content. Mainly this is because 35% of the commercials are for entertainment, which mostly consists of movies that contain belly-dancers or some love scenes. Usually commercials other than entertainment try to portray ordinary citizens in modern Western-style and not suggestively clad.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study indicated that although women started holding highly ranked positions long time ago in Egypt starting by the second half of the twentieth century, this image is not reflected in those television commercials under the current study. The Egyptian television commercials essentially look like commercials throughout the world, which are filled with beautiful, young women either tending to the household and children while promoting products that make their homes cleaner and their bodies more attractive, or as decorative sex objects that draw attention to products that appeal to men. These findings are consisted with Courtney & Whipple's (1983) study, which revealed that women's roles have expanded, but their portrayal in advertising continues to

be narrow. They also concluded that “the images of the sexes in advertising are not keeping pace with the change but in fact reflect the status quo of a time gone by.”

As reported earlier in the literature review, traditional gender roles are almost existing in many different countries, Islamic or not. It is true that these studies vary from one study to another and from one country to another, but overall the findings revealed that women were more likely to serve in domestic roles than in professional ones. Therefore, while looking to general patterns and modalities, people must avoid making Islam the primary explanatory factor in gender relations (Bates & Rassam, 2001). Islam does not insist that women have limited rights or roles in society, but the restrictions placed on women are the result of patriarchal attitudes in society, which are reinforced either by extreme male religious scholars or sometime by the state (Bates & Rassam, 2001). The state, in many cases, uses religious justifications to implement its own policy (Eickelman, 2002).

Apparently, not only the state, economic reasons or some extreme Islamic thinkers who are emphasizing these traditional roles for women, also these traditional roles are sometimes emphasized by women themselves. Some scholars pointed out to the passivity of the current generation of women to the relative facility with which they found education and work (Fernea, 1985).

In conclusion, this study indicated that there is stereotypical gender role portrayal in Egyptian television commercials. It also concluded that advertising in Egypt and throughout the world, portrays a society that really does not exist in any culture. Thus, It is very important to emphasize that this repeated stereotypical portrayals in mass media, will eventually restrict people’s expectations to those stereotyped roles.

However, this study also indicated that the advertising industry's growing sensitivity towards women. Therefore, marketers considering advertising their products in Egypt, should be aware of the norms in terms of how the sexes are portrayed and also of how those sex-role portrayals are changing.

### **Recommendations**

For similar studies in the future, a slight change in the coding sheet is suggested. The author believes that it will be more interesting to remove the setting criteria from the first page and place it in each page of primary characters. This change will enable researchers to examine the relationship between gender and setting directly. See appendix A.

For future studies, describing gender roles in different types of the Egyptian media is suggested. Also, examining the portrayals of men and women in schools' curriculum, could assess researchers to understand the role that these curriculum can play on forming "cultivate" students' attitudes and beliefs towards gender roles in the Egyptian society.

In addition, conducting similar studies in different parts of the Middle East and comparing the results to the findings of this study to examine how cultural disparities affect gender- roles.

According to some anthropologists, gendering is "how women and men make their femininities and masculinities known to themselves and to each other" (Eickelman, 2002, p.179). To examine the effects of mass media on people's perception about gender-roles in reality, further studies should be conducted on people themselves. Therefore, another one can support this study that use different type of research methods

such as surveys, focus groups or experimental methods. Then a correlation between the results of these two studies may lead to useful findings regarding the roles played by the mass media in molding people's perception of reality.

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## **APPENDIX A-- CODING SHEET**

AdID#:	Coder:	Product:	Brand
Type of spot:	(1) commercial	(2) station promo	(3) PSA
Length of spot:	# of seconds	Advertising Agency:	
Language:	(1) English	(2) Arabic	(3) both (4) neither
Product:	(1) Egyptian	(2) Imported	(3) Unknown

• **Characters present:**

- ☐ no characters (1)  
☐ all male adult (2)  
☐ all female adult (3)  
☐ all adults/mixed sex (4)  
☐ all children or teens (5)  
☐ male adult w/children/teens (6)  
☐ female adult w/children/teens (7)  
☐ mixture of ages and genders (8)

• **Setting**

- ☐ Kitchen (1)  
☐ bathroom (2)  
☐ other room in house (3)  
☐ outdoors at home (4)  
☐ outdoors away from home (5)  
☐ restaurant/bar (6)  
☐ business (7)  
☐ school (8)  
☐ social (9)  
☐ multiple settings (10)  
☐ other/unclear (11)

• **Goffman: Male/Female roles (check all that apply)**

- ☐ traditional (male dominant) (1= yes, 0 = no)  
☐ reverse sex (female dominant) (1= yes, 0 = no)  
☐ equality (1= yes, 0 = no)  
☐ none (1= yes, 0 = no)  
☐ other (1= yes, 0 = no)

• **Primary narrator:**

- ☐ female (1)  
☐ male (2)  
☐ both (3)  
☐ none (4)

• **Sexual content:**

- ☐ visual sexual images (1)  
☐ verbal sexual references (2)  
☐ both (3)  
☐ none (4)

• **Sexual contact: (check highest level observed: only one, or leave blank if none)**

- ☐ eye contact (1)  
☐ holding hands (2)  
☐ other contacts (3)  
☐ none (4)

• **Appeal**

- ☐ price promotion (1= yes, 0 = no)  
☐ image (1= yes, 0 = no)

**Female # 1:**

• **Primary role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ professional (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ parent (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (5)

• **Lowest degree of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ not sexually clad (demure) (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ suggestively clad (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ partially clad (3)

• **Type of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional(1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Modern(2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ cover hair (3)

• **Race / Ethnicity:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Arabic (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ White/European (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black/African (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other/unknown (5)

• **Age:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ under 20 (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21 - 30 (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31 - 40 (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41 - 50 (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ over 50 (5)

• **Roles:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ parent ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ responsible for home ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ involved in household chores ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ adjuncts to other sex ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ autonomous individuals ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ advising opposite sex (could be woman advising man or man advising woman) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ professional ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other employee (non-professional) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other

• **Consumer role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of high-ticket item (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of sex appeal item (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of cleanliness items for home or self (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of other item (4)

• **Role in relation to product:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ product representative (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority based on use (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority, but not based on use (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ none (4)



**Female # 2:**

- **Primary role:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ professional (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ lover (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parent (4)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other (5)
- **Lowest degree of dress:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ not sexually clad (demure) (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ suggestively clad (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ partially clad (3)
- **Type of dress:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional(1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Modern(2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ cover hair (3)
- **Race / Ethnicity:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Arabic (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ White/European (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Black/African (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Asian (4)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other/unknown (5)
- **Age:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ under 20 (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 21 - 30 (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 31 - 40 (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 41 - 50 (4)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ over 50 (5)
- **Roles:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parent ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ responsible for home ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ involved in household chores ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ adjuncts to other sex ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ autonomous individuals ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ advising opposite sex (could be woman advising man or man advising woman) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ professional ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other employee (non-professional) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ lover ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other
- **Consumer role:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of high-ticket item (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of sex appeal item (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of cleanliness items for home or self (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of other item (4)
- **Role in relation to product:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ product representative (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ product authority based on use (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ product authority, but not based on use (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ none (4)

**Male # 1:**

• **Primary role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ professional (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ parent (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (5)

• **Lowest degree of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ not sexually clad (demure) (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ suggestively clad (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ partially clad (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ nude (4)

• **Type of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional(1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Modern(2)

• **Race / Ethnicity:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Arabic (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ White/European (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black/African (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other/unknown (5)

• **Age:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ under 20 (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21 - 30 (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31 - 40 (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41 - 50 (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ over 50 (5)

• **Roles:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ parent ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ responsible for home ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ involved in household chores ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ adjuncts to other sex ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ autonomous individuals ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ advising opposite sex (could be woman advising man or man advising woman) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ professional ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other employee (non-professional) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other

• **Consumer role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of high-ticket item (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of sex appeal item (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of cleanliness items for home or self (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of other item (4)

• **Role in relation to product:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ product representative (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority based on use (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority, but not based on use (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ none (4)

**Male # 2:**

• **Primary role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ professional (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ parent (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (5)

• **Lowest degree of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ not sexually clad (demure) (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ suggestively clad (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ partially clad (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ nude (4)

• **Type of dress:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional(1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Modern(2)

• **Race / Ethnicity:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Arabic (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ White/European (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black/African (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other/unknown (5)

• **Age:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ under 20 (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21 - 30 (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31 - 40 (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41 - 50 (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ over 50 (5)

• **Roles:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ parent ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ responsible for home ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ homemaker ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ involved in household chores ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ adjuncts to other sex ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ autonomous individuals ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ advising opposite sex (could be woman advising man or man advising woman) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ professional ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other employee (non-professional) ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ lover ( 1 = yes, 0 = no )
- \_\_\_\_\_ other

• **Consumer role:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of high-ticket item (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of sex appeal item (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of cleanliness items for home or self (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consumer of other item (4)

• **Role in relation to product:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ product representative (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority based on use (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ product authority, but not based on use (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ none (4)



## VITA

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